

Testimony on House Bill 4131**Second Parent Adoption****House Judiciary Committee****April 22, 2009**

Good morning, Representative Meadows and Members of the Committee:

I am Maxine Thome, Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers -Michigan Chapter, which represents about 8,000 licensed social workers in the state. I speak today for the Association in our consistent support of the welfare of Michigan's children and the Second Parent Adoption Bill, House Bill 4131, introduced by Representative Alma Wheeler Smith.

It is our belief that the critical factors in a child's emotional and physical well-being are stability, love, safety, and respect. These components are best assured through adoption by two concerned, loving parents based on parenting ability and not marital status. The bill will ensure that both parents are financially responsible for their children in the event of death or separation of the parents.

All too often "good parenting " has been based on moral values or religious beliefs regarding the definition of marital status rather than concrete indicators of parental competency. Recent research has shown that children raised by same sex parents fare as well in all indicators such as grades, social and emotional well-being, and sense of responsibility as those raised by opposite sex parents.

Whether or not individuals are married has not been proven to be an indicator of lasting relationships or an ability to parent. The ability for a second parent to adopt allows for greater security around decision-making, health benefits, emergency medical decisions, shared legal decisions and shared financial responsibility. To deny the ability for a second individual to adopt based on marital status is to further place children in Michigan at risk.

Children who are not adopted have been shown to fall through the cracks and end up lost in the system -- homeless, truant, and/or pregnant. The National Association of Social Workers -Michigan Chapter believes it is time to open doors for adoption in as many ways as possible and to provide Michigan's children with the greatest security and safety net available. It is time to make the best decisions possible for the well-being of our children.

Thank you very much for allowing me to speak in support of House Bill 4131. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Maxine Thome, PhD, LMSW, ACSW, MPH
Executive Director